Attention: to The Honorable:
J. Joseph Rossi P-53941
& Steve Meyer.

OFFICE OF BARACK OBAMA

June 23, 2017

Stacey Smith
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Dear Stacey:

Thank you for writing. Criminal justice reform has been a focus of my entire career, and I appreciate your sharing your story.

There is no denying that some people deserve to go to prison—as a society, we have to keep our communities safe and protect our citizens. Still, how we treat those who have made mistakes speaks to our values and who we are as a people. America is a nation of second chances, and folks who may have broken the law but paid their debt to society should have the opportunity to get their lives back on track. When our criminal justice system isn't as fair as it should be or doesn't give people a fair shot at having that extra chance, it hurts all of us. It has ripple effects on our entire country, and we deprive ourselves of enormous potential—not just in terms of people who are willing to work, but people who are willing to atone for their mistakes and serve as positive role models for our young people.

I am proud of the progress we have made in recent years, and I remain hopeful that by joining in common effort, we can continue working to ensure our criminal justice system reflects our founding ideals. Thank you, again, for writing—your message will remain on my mind.

Sincerely,

